



DrugScope welcomes publication of Harm Reduction Action Plan

22 May 2007

DrugScope responded today to the announcement of the Department of Health's new drug Harm Reduction Action Plan.

Martin Barnes, chief executive of DrugScope, said:

"We welcome the recognition that more needs to be done to reduce drug-related deaths and blood-borne virus infections. The introduction of needle exchange schemes 20 years ago has helped ensure that this country has one of the lowest rates of HIV infection in Europe, but more recently rates of infection among injecting drug users has been increasing.

We have one of the highest rates of drug-related deaths in Europe but the numbers may in fact be nearly twice that shown by official data. The tragedy is that nearly every drug-related death is avoidable.

We need to see a significant shift in policy focus and investment towards the public health harms related to drug use in the next drug strategy.

While we welcome the additional funds announced today, we remain concerned about the 6 million cut the Government has made in drug education and prevention work for young people. It is unclear how much of the additional funding will go direct to front line services such as needle exchange projects."

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